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Crown wants eight years

Harry Gleason Leavere will be sentenced for the manslaughter death of Courtney Tourand Feb. 27, Page 3

Saved by social media

Regional police and Facebook partner to save a Niagara man's life. Page 20

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Agencies rally behind United Way



MARYANNE FIRTH /
CNA SERVICE NIAGARA
United Way of South Niagara executive director Tamara Coleman-Lawrie was surprised by the amount of feedback she received Thursday following an eyebrow-raising news release that highlighted what she calls the agency's negative perception in the community. See story on page 2

<p>HometownRealEstateGuy.com</p> <p>Michael Smith SALES REPRESENTATIVE</p> <p>TOP 10 RLP AGENT 2012-2013</p> <p>2009 2012 2009-2014 2012 2012</p> <p>ROYALLEPAGE</p> <p>Ph: 905.634.9000 DIRECT: 905.650.4741</p>	<p>NEW LISTING!</p> <p>OPEN HOUSE SUNDAY 2-3:30 PM</p> <p>68 Erie St., PC Charming 3 bed 2 bath character home in central PC location with several updates. \$152,500</p>	<p>NEW LISTING!</p> <p>OPEN HOUSE SUNDAY 2-3:30 PM</p> <p>125 Highland Ave., PC Pristine 2 bed bungalow fully updated with detached 1 1/2 car garage on quiet PC side street! \$174,900</p>	<p>FOR LEASE</p> <p>227 CHARLOTTE ST., PC Fully updated 2 bed main floor apartment with optional garage immediate possession possible \$875 p.m.</p>
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UPFRONT

■ **COMMUNITY:** Public reacts to bold statements by executive director

United Way not a 'sham'

MARYANNE FIRTH
QMI Agency Niagara

Getting a conversation started in the community.

That was the intention of United Way of South Niagara executive director Tamara Coleman-Lawrie last Wednesday when she issued a news release that raised some eyebrows.

In the release, she stated that "too many people in our community think United Way is a sham" and that the organization was not receiving the support it requires to meet its fundraising campaign goal.

As a result, the community did start talking.

Coleman-Lawrie was surprised by the sheer volume of feedback, both positive and negative, that she received throughout the next day.

"There was a lot of support out there for us trying to be as bold and transparent as we could be," she said following an admittedly stressful day.

She received calls from other organizations, city councillors and businesses throughout south Niagara that both praised and panned her decision to address what she called a negative perception of the organization.

"There's a white elephant in the room. Let's start talking about it," Coleman-Lawrie said unapologetically, adding she's hopeful people will begin to see charities in a new and more accurate light.

"We need to start having these conversations so people can evaluate the United Way based on its merits and financial records, not based on just what neighbour Joe Smith is saying."

Without naming names, Coleman-Lawrie said she was surprised by "people who are high-up in the community who were upset with me for clearing the air."

"That negativity will only breed further negativity, she said.

"To the naysayers, pick up the phone and call me. Address it with me."

ONLINE READER REACTION

"Unfortunately the Niagara south region of the United Way has over the past couple of decades, despite its very worthy programs, become a victim of too many residents' self-absorbed, selfish, angry attitudes towards the less fortunate, labelling them as 'losers' as we have seen over the past year in The Tribune section on poverty and food banks. It didn't used to be this way as I had personal involvement with many of the agencies as a volunteer and an employee. I'm not sure it's the United Way's image or just that the populace here has become hardened and less inclined to help anyone but themselves due to the turn down of the economy. Most enlightened communities when this happens come and work together to make the situation better. Not Niagara south for some reason. They like to wallow in their hatred."

— Elizabeth Maria Siger

"Sorry, Tamara, I have my own perceptions of organized charity. That said, I donate directly to the cause and in the manner I wish to and that's not chump change. When working, I always checked the "no" box for payroll deductions."

— William Morgan

"Before you donate, ask how much of your donation stays in your community, if you can't get a straight-up answer or too much of your donation is given to the national chapter, you may want to choose another charity."

But please, give what you can and don't paint all charities with the same brush."

— Rob Janzen

"Never give money to the United Way, ever. If you want to support a local charity, go to the one you like and give them the money and eliminate the expensive (United Way) middleman."

— Mars Foster

Coleman-Lawrie spent much time last Thursday responding to comments on the original article on The Tribune's website.

"Our community members are talking, and when they do, we listen. It is my responsibility to respond," she said.

She felt it was an opportunity to dispel myths about the organization and share facts about what United Way does.

Local agencies among the more than 30 supported by the United Way also came to the organization's defence Thursday.

"We wouldn't be able to deliver the services we do without United Way funding," said Ruthann Brown, executive director of Women's Place of South Niagara.

In 2014, Women's Place received \$46,000 to support, among others, a program that helps women escaping vio-

lence to navigate the family court system and issues such as custody.

"It's important that women have that service in order to transition to violence-free lives," Brown said, adding United Way makes that possible.

"It's distressing to see they're under such scrutiny, because they're integral to our community."

Brown was also disheartened by the misconception that much of the United Way's funding goes toward staff costs.

All registered charities are looked at "under a microscope," she said.

"The finance reports are there to look at. Instead of making assumptions, it's better to be grounded in fact."

Five weeks from the end of its campaign and the United Way has only raised \$480,000

of its \$630,000 goal.

"If the United Way cannot meet its goal, the domino effect on other agencies will be significant," Brown said.

Niagara's economic climate has led to increased demand at most agencies and, in turn, has made the need for donations greater, she said.

She believes "donor fatigue" has begun to set in, which has left some people feeling cynical and negative toward charities.

"We're hopeful the generous spirit of people will come through so we can continue to provide the supports needed."

Coleman-Lawrie expressed her appreciation for those who have contributed and continued to contribute to United Way.

"We're very grateful for their donations," she said, adding her news release was by no means intended to belittle those contributions.

"Our main goal is to grow the campaign, but if we don't publicly address those misconceptions, we just can't do that."

Welland Mayor Frank Campbell said he was surprised to learn United Way felt there was a negative perception of the organization in the community.

"They have a history of doing a good job and making sure funds are available to help charitable organizations," he said.

"They're good at what they do."

United Way has been providing funding to Big Brothers Big Sisters of South Niagara since the agency, which provides mentorship for youths, opened in 1965.

If Big Brothers lost that support, including \$65,000 provided in 2014, it would mean 65 less mentoring matches would be made, said executive director Barb Van Der Heyden.

Not only does the United Way provide funds, she said, it also helps to promote Big Brothers throughout Niagara

UNITED WAY OF SOUTH NIAGARA 2013 EXPENSE BREAKDOWN

74%: \$499,322 for charitable programs and gifts to other registered charities and qualified donors.

10%: \$69,867 for management and administration

16%: \$107,649 for fundraising initiatives and supplies

Less than 1%: \$3,178 for one-time expenses

Total compensation for all employees (three full-time positions, one part-time summer student): \$138,527

Source: Canada Revenue Agency

and has provided networking opportunities that have created valuable partnerships.

Last year, United Way contributed \$80,000 to programming at Port Cares.

"We put in a request for more this year, but recognize the United Way does as much as it can with what it has," said executive director Christine Clark Lafluer.

The struggle United Way is having meeting its campaign goal is "something we all take very seriously," she said.

"But it's the reality of the times. When it comes to the economy, we're not surprised."

Port Cares, she said, has "seen a 30% increase year over year in our food bank reg-

istrants," including a growing number of young women with children.

"One can appreciate the challenges the United Way is up against," Clark Lafluer said.

If the organization is not able to meet its campaign goal, it will have an impact on Port Cares' crisis services for clients and work at the Reach Out Centre food bank.

For more information on United Way of South Niagara or to make a donation, visit www.unitedwaysouthniagara.ca.

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LOCAL NEWS

■ **COURT:** Crown seeks eight-year jail term in death of Courtney Tourand; Leavere will be sentenced Feb. 27

'Life will never be the same'

GREG FURMINGER
QMI Agency Niagara

Two large photos of a beautiful young woman with a dazzling smile stood in stark contrast to the ugly facts of her untimely death, in a Welland courtroom Tuesday. Courtney Tourand was 31. She loved to take care of her family, including her four little nephews.

The Port Colborne woman was a wife, a giggler, someone ready to aim for better things.

All that ended in a matter of minutes, in apartment No. 2 at 262 West St.

"Life will never be the same," said Troy Pellerin, the partner of one of her three older sisters, as he gave a brief victim impact statement in Ontario Court of Justice at the start of the sentencing hearing for Harry Gleason Leavere.

As Leavere sat in the prisoner's box, his eyes often looking down, Liz Churnick told him the "anguish and intense pain caused by the actions you made" have affected herself and other family members.

"I cry a lot. This is such a sad, tragic story," said Churnick, who is Tourand's aunt.

A full courtroom heard how the now 45-year-old man and Tourand found friendship and comfort in the bottle, and how their friendship came to a quick end.

According to an agreed to statement of facts, the two were at Leavere's apartment drinking and listening to music when they got into an argument that turned physical, initiated by Courtney.

The two wrestled and Leavere fell on top of her. He put his arm to her neck in an attempt to restrain her. She went unconscious, then he carried her to the couch.

When Leavere woke in the morning, he discovered Tourand dead.

Churnick told court she still struggles with the fact her niece's blood was found in every room of Leavere's apart-



GREG FURMINGER/QMI AGENCY NIAGARA

The sisters of Courtney Tourand — from left, Shannon Bird, Lindsay Tourand and Erin Raffley — hold the Port Colborne woman's photo following sentencing arguments for Harry Gleason Leavere, who has pleaded guilty to manslaughter in Courtney's 2013 death. Leavere will be sentenced by Judge Troy Colvin on Feb. 27 in Ontario Court of Justice in Welland.

ment, that he tried to wipe up the evidence, that Tourand had four fractured ribs.

"I've seen the pictures of what you did to a 'friend,' she said, before noting how Tourand's body was found snuffed into garbage bags.

"You ran, leaving her to rot while her family went on searching and searching for her."

Tourand was last seen by her family on Aug. 21, 2013. She was found in Leavere's Port Colborne apartment shortly after 3 a.m. on Aug. 27. He was taken into custody in Hamilton about 12 hours later.

Originally charged with second-degree murder and offering indignity to a body, last November Leavere agreed instead to plead guilty to manslaughter.

As she continued her victim impact statement, Churnick called it "ridiculous" that she should feel a need to justify Tourand's life. To give it value.

She said the court made her niece out to be "some stupid drunk."

The "fun-loving kid" turned to alcohol after being diagnosed with the Huntington's disease gene, the same one that left her father ill for 17 years before his death.

Alcohol was the coping mechanism for a woman whose mom had also died, 17 years ago.

She sought treatment and counselling for her addiction on a number of occasions, recognizing a need to turn her life around, said sister Lindsay Tourand, about a year her senior.

She said she is left wondering, perhaps, if she had done more for her that Courtney might still be alive.

Tourand had attended E.L. Crossley Secondary School in Pelham, where she met high school sweetheart Derek Reid. At the time of her death, they had been together for 18 years and moved to their Port Colborne home just two years earlier.

Shooting him a cutting stare, her common-law husband directed terse remarks at Leavere.

"I hope after today I never see you again," he said bitterly. "You make me sick. I hate you."

Said eldest sister Erin Raffley: "I will never get to hug Courtney again, and I will never really know what hap-

pened to her."

She asked the court to impose the maximum life sentence.

Since Leavere had no prior criminal record, he's considered unlikely to re-offend and other circumstances of the case paralleled in case law, Crown attorney Graeme Leach is seeking eight years in prison.

Although he said Leavere "professes that he, quote, 'just lost it,'" said "aggravating" circumstances should be taken into consideration.

"Courtney was naked, she was concealed in garbage bags," Leach said of a decision that "should attract public outrage over and above the killing itself."

Tourand's clothes, purse and cellphone were removed from the apartment.

Defence lawyer Noah Schachter asked the court for six years, calling Leavere's actions a "one-off occurrence."

"This was very out of character for Mr. Leavere," he said.

He noted alcoholism was at play and also said Leavere has dealt with mental health issues for most of his life. But, he added, his client has asked that his mental health not be a major factor in this case, that he takes full responsibility.

"This was not an intentional act by Mr. Leavere to end her life," he said.

"He is extremely remorseful for his actions — he has expressed this to me multiple times."

No cause of death was determined.

An autopsy did show ethanol and disrepair in Tourand's system, and it was noted she had cirrhosis of the liver.

Leavere has never sought bail and has remained at Niagara Detention Centre in Thorold for the past 17 months and, now, 10 days.

In a soft voice that drew more tears from Tourand's family, Leavere, wearing loose-fitting black pants and a blue dress shirt, briefly addressed the court.

"I'm deeply sorry and extremely remorseful. I take all the blame," he said.

"I think closure would be best for everyone."

Judge Troy Colvin reserved sentencing until the end of February, saying there is a "great deal to consider" before coming to "the right answer."

Outside the court, Churnick said any sentence "will never be enough" and will never bring back Tourand.

Since her death, there have been good days but many bad days for family.

"Lots of sad times," Churnick said. "We just bang on to each other. This is very nerve-wracking," she said.

Leavere will be sentenced Feb. 27 at 10 a.m.

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I've been thinking about why we pray

REV. DR. STEVEN DAVIS

Central United Church, Port Colborne

At a study group I was leading not very long ago, someone raised a question about prayer.

It's not the first time I've been asked this question. "If God already knows everything — even what it is that we're going to ask — then why should we bother asking in the first place? What's the point of even praying?"

Really, it's not a bad question. Looked at logically, it does seem like a bit of a pointless exercise, to ask someone something even though they already know what we're going to ask for and what we need. Are we wasting time and energy by praying? And, of course, there are those who reject the idea that there could be a God who knows everything. I've sometimes heard the argument that even the most advances and complex computer we could imagine wouldn't be able to know everything that people of faith claim God

knows. Which, of course, represents a problem in the perception of God.

We perceive God according to what's possible for us, and we find it difficult to imagine that a God could exist who can do things that we're not capable of doing. We could go a long way talking about that point, but I'm more interested in the question of why we pray if God already knows what we're going to say.

I suppose, first, that we pray simply because it's an act of faith. Praying to God is a way of demonstrating (whether to God or to ourselves) that we believe. We surely wouldn't waste our time praying to a God in whom we don't believe, so praying becomes a very open and personal way in which we express that simple concept that "God, we believe." The fact that we pray demonstrates that we have faith. The fact that we have faith causes us to pray. Each strengthens the other.

Second, we pray in order to build our relationship with God. We believe in God, so we want to be in relationship with God. But, of

course, it's pretty hard to be in relationship with someone if you never bother speaking to them. I try to spend some time early in my day in prayer. It's a way of saying, "Good morning, God. I'm glad you're still with me." It reminds me as the day begins that it always begins with God present. Praying reminds me that God is always with me. Praying makes me feel closer to God.

Third, we pray to build our relationships with others and to increase our sense of community and connectedness with those around us. When we gather together in worship, there's always a part of the service set aside for what we call "intercessory prayer" or, in some traditions, "prayers of the people." These are the prayers we address to God seeking help for those who have need. We know that God already knows about these needs. We're not giving God any information or knowledge that God doesn't already possess. But we pray for each other because it reminds us that we're a community — a family, the family of God — and that

we care about each other. It means a great deal to me when people tell me that they've been praying for me. It binds us together with each other. It's part of being a caring community.

Finally, we pray because it's good for us — in a lot of different ways. It's good for us spiritually for all of the above reasons.

Prayer is good for us emotionally because prayer can be almost cathartic — it gives us a way to express our deepest feelings to someone who will never hold anything we say against us; it allows us to be completely open and honest.

Prayer is even good for us physically. I've seen studies that suggest that those who pray (or engage in other spiritual disciplines on a regular basis) are generally healthier. They have lower levels of stress, lower blood pressure, and other positive physical results.

We don't pray because we want to tell God something that God already knows. We pray because it's good for us — in all sorts of ways.

Shipwrecks — Atlantic Water

SKIP GILLHAM

For QMI Agency Niagara

The Atlantic Water was flying the flag of Panama when it came to the Great Lakes for a single trip in 1959.

The Second World War vintage Liberty Ship had been built at Houston, Texas, and completed in October 1944 for the United States Maritime Commission as *Richard J. Hopkins*.

The 134.6-metre-long freighter carried war, and then peace time, cargoes before being sold and registered in Panama as *Atlantic Water* in 1951. It operated on the oceans of the world before it made its single trip to the Great Lakes.

A sale to Greek interests in 1961 resulted in a new name of *Koumotsissa* and it then became *Agia Eirini L.* two years later for the Horizon Navigation Co. of Liberia.

On Feb. 3, 1964, *Agia Eirini L.* encountered heavy weather on the Pacific while carrying scrap steel from Portland, Ore., to Kawasaki, Japan. Hull fractures and leaks developed from the force of the pounding seas and the ship went down about 965 kilometres southeast of Yokohama, Japan. Miraculously, all of the crew were rescued.



Atlantic Water, in an undated photo.

DAN MCCORMICK, QMI AGENCY

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COMMENT

■ I'VE BEEN THINKING

Lent and life

PASTOR MICHAEL MELED

Faith & St. Peter's Lutheran Churches, Dunnville
and Port Colborne

Most Christians in the world follow the church year. The year has seasons which follow the life of our Saviour, Jesus Christ and the life of His Church.

Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Easter and Pentecost (or Trinity) are the six seasons.

This ancient tradition of the Church has many benefits. It helps to focus our attention on who Jesus is, on His life, preaching and saving work. As we are nearing the season of Lent it may be helpful in your Christian life to learn a little about it. Lent is the season of preparation and repentance looking toward Good Friday and Easter; that is, to Jesus's death and resurrection.

Lent is a journey. We began this journey Ash Wednesday (Feb. 18 this year), and we travel 40 days toward Jesus's death and resurrection. We think about our sins, our selfishness, our utter unworthiness, we confess our sins and are forgiven by Christ our Saviour. As we journey we grow by hearing God's Word and the receiving His Sacrament, by prayer and even by fasting, if our health allows. Fasting is not simply "giving up something for Lent," but allowing ourselves to be and remain hungry for a time so our thoughts, prayers and hearing of God's Word will be clearer, and so that we can better appreciate all that our loving heavenly Father has done and even now does for us in Christ.

Lent has always had two main purposes:

1. To be a special time to ponder Christ's suffering and death for the sins of the world, and in considering His suffering, to take an honest look at ourselves, at our sins, to repent, to renew our desire to change our sinful behaviour, and to be forgiven; and

2. To be a special time of catechesis (instruction in Christian doctrine; we focus on learning God's Word) especially for those who are in the process of becoming members of the Church.

As part of No. 1, Christians do well to focus on our own sin and selfishness, on trying to change sinful behaviour, and on receiving from God mercy and forgiveness. These should be part of our life every day, and the season of Lent is a great place to start. Lent is a great time to get back into that biblical, Christian life which is characterized by hearing God's Word, repenting of our sins, with God's help trying to do better, and receiving His great forgiveness where He has promised to be for our forgiveness, life and salvation — in His Word and Sacraments. This is how purpose No. 1 and purpose No. 2 of Lent fit together.

The holy Word of God reveals the Father's work of salvation through Jesus, and the new life given to us by His great sacrifice. We have been baptized into His death and resurrection and live new lives in Him because of it (see Romans 6). He is the giver and He gives. He draws us to Himself through His Word and Holy Baptism, gives us the Holy Spirit, and He lives in us.

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Port Colborne Lioness deliver sweet fundraiser

The Port Colborne Lioness Club has launched a sweet fundraiser just in time for Valentine's Day.

The candy gram initiative, Surprise Your Sweetheart, is offering handmade chocolates delivered right to the door of your loved ones.

The artisanal treats are made in Port Colborne by Cocoa Cheeka Chocolates and include flavours such as almond, pecan, toffee, butter me up truffle and salted caramel.

Each gift box is \$10 including delivery.

"We were looking to do something different, unique,"

Lioness vice-president Katherine Klauk said of the new initiative that runs throughout February.

Funds raised will go toward a variety of local charities supported by the Lioness.

To order, e-mail Katherine.Klauk@hotmail.com or call 905-835-8577.

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LOCAL NEWS

■ **POLITICS:** Chambers of commerce selling tickets to Feb. 26 south Niagara affair

It's a 6-pack mayors luncheon

GREG FURMINGER
QMI Agency Niagara

Niagara's southern-tier mayors are expected to dish out news about the local economy when they're served up at a chambers of commerce luncheon at the end of February.

According to an invitation e-mailed this week by the chambers of Welland-Pelham, Port Colborne-Wainfleet, Niagara Falls and Greater Fort Erie, the mayors "will discuss new and useful economic and community-based information."

At this point, rookie Welland Mayor Frank Cam-

plon quipped that he's not exactly sure what to expect of the luncheon, or what exactly he and his counterparts will be saying.

"We're probably going to be talking about regional economic incentives," he said, but while adding the mayors in the coming week were to discuss a speaking plan for their Feb. 26 engagement in order to avoid each spouting off the same words.

Other newcomers to the south Niagara six-pack are Port Colborne Mayor John Maloney and, back after an absence from the top seat, Fort Erie Mayor Wayne Rede-

kop. Pelham Mayor Dave Augustyn, Wainfleet Mayor April Jeffs and Niagara Falls Mayor Jim Diodati have also confirmed their attendance at the luncheon.

Dolores Fabiano, executive director of all but the Fort Erie chamber of commerce, looks forward to having a "couple of newbies" at the event.

"It's always exciting when there is because it's always interesting to see how our mayors work together, how they gel," she said.

The most recent luncheon, normally held in the year's first quarter, was last March.

Previous term leaders then touched on the Pan Am Games and World Dragon Boat Championships both to be held in Welland in 2015; the east Fonthill development plan that will see 180 hectares of land developed for commercial and residential use; construction of the Canadian Motor Speedway in Fort Erie; the more than 400 hectares of economic gateway employment lands in Port Colborne; and the potential for Niagara to become a connection between high-speed rail links being constructed in New York City and Toronto.

Fabiano said the past two luncheons which could accommodate about 250 people both sold out.

The next mayor's luncheon will take place in the Fort Erie Leisureship banquet hall, with



seating also for about 250 people. Tickets are \$40 for chamber members, or \$50 for others, including tax and tips.

Seats can be reserved by calling Greater Fort Erie Chamber of Commerce at 905-871-3803 or by e-mail at

office@forteriechamber.com. The event is sponsored by PenFinancial Credit Union with the Grant Thornton accounting firm.

greg.furminger@sunmedia.ca
Twitter: @GregAtTheErie

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■ CITY COUNCIL: Two-year moratorium

Port waives development fees on commercial, industrial sites

MARYANNE FIRTH
QMI Agency Niagara

Development charges in Port Colborne are no more — for now. City council approved a bylaw last week that will waive development charges on industrial, commercial and institutional properties for two years.

The changes were backdated to Sept. 9, 2014, to coincide with the two-year moratorium council placed on residential development charges last year.

To make up the potential loss in development charges, the city will have to raise taxes by an estimated 0.24%.

While waiving the charges itself drew no discussion, there was one issue in particular that had some councillors concerned.

The staff report had initially come forward at the Jan. 12 council meeting, but was deferred after Ward 4 Coun. Barbara Butters said information had inadvertently been left out.

She asked the development on

the corner of Steele St. and Killaly St. W., the new location of Matheson's Drug Store, be grandfathered into the bylaw and development charges waived.

Store owner Gary Matheson had originally come to council in April requesting the waiving of the fees and the matter was directed back to staff.

Later that month, Port Colborne hired consultants to conduct a mandatory study on development charges. The study was completed in August.

During Monday night's meeting, Butters said she was disappointed to learn the development could not benefit from the most recent changes. According to the staff report, that would be considered "bonusing" and could have negative legal implications for the city, she said.

"When we go forward there needs to be some way of flagging this stuff, especially within months," she said, while recommending applicants be notified.

"I mean four months. Talk about

bad timing. I wish there was something we could do."

Ward 3 Coun. Bea Kenny said a building permit was not obtained for the Matheson development until June, when more than \$6,800 in development charges was paid to the city and more than \$57,000 to the region.

"And on a corner that's already serviced," she said.

"I don't consider it bonusing. We knew he was developing that corner. That corner sat empty for years."

She questioned what position it would leave the city in legally if they were to move forward with the grandfathering, despite legal council's recommendation not to.

In order to provide that legal advice, chief administrative officer Bob Hiel asked that council go into closed session.

When council returned from its in-camera meeting only a few minutes later, the matter was approved without discussion.

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■ CITY COUNCIL

Warm weather needed to fix Vale centre's leaky roof

MARYANNE FIRTH
QMI Agency Niagara

Port Colborne will have to wait until the weather warms to pinpoint the cause of the leaky roof at the Vale Health and Wellness Centre.

A staff report updating the issue at the two-year-old facility was presented to city council last week.

It's believed the "culprit" is a gutter that runs north to south and is supposed to drain water from about 40,000-square-feet of the 144,000-square-foot roof, said engineering and operations director Ron Hanson.

While the city conducted a third-party leak investigation, hiring an independent contractor at minimal cost to look into the issue, the definite cause cannot be determined until the weather warms, he said.

Because the gutters are full of ice and snow, the appropriate water tests cannot be conducted until they thaw, Hanson said. Several consecutive days with temperatures above freezing is needed for the test to be done, he added.

As soon as temperatures rise above freezing, the testing will be done fol-

lowed by repairs.

The facility's gutters all have heat tracing cables meant to melt ice and snow, but they haven't been performing properly, Hanson said.

"We're all frustrated with this, but the faster we get it fixed, the better," said Ward 2 Coun. Yvon Doucet.

"Everyone understands you can't go out on the roof this time of year ... I appreciate that you're working hard to get it done."

Hanson said there have been issues with the roof since the facility opened in February 2013 and the subcontractor that did the job has been on the roof several times since.

"We weren't satisfied with the progress we were seeing," he said, which is why an independent contractor was brought in to try to pinpoint the leak.

The roof will be repaired at no cost to the city, as it's still under warranty, he added.

Hanson said it's likely the gutter will need to be removed, the roof membrane replaced and the gutter reinstalled.

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LOCAL NEWS

FUNDRAISER

A 24-hour spin for the cancer society



DON FRASER/QMI AGENCY NIAGARA

The final hours of a 24-hour stationary bike team relay spinathon for the Canadian Cancer Society's Niagara office, which ended Sunday at noon. The third annual Battle in the Saddle was organized by Energy Fitness Studio and took place inside the St. Catharines Holiday Inn.

DON FRASER
QMI Agency Niagara

Sara Byers' ride to fitness began six years ago with a goal to shed pounds.

"I got hooked on spin classes, and at the same time we entered a team in the Ride to Conquer Cancer," said Byers, 36, who is a museum curator.

On the day that ride, she found out her mother had cancer — a battle her mom is winning.

"Things just coincided," said Byers, a St. Catharines resident who has since become a Canadian medal-winning indoor track cyclist.

"And this spin-a-thon is great, as you can do something positive and work through things in events like this. It's a great atmosphere, everyone is working at this together, encouraging each

other.

"You feed off of each other's energy."

Byers was part of a 24-hour stationary bike team relay spin-a-thon for the Canadian Cancer Society's Niagara office that ended Sunday at noon.

The third annual Battle in the Saddle was organized by Energy Fitness Studio and took place inside St. Catharines' Holiday Inn.

"We have some people that have ridden over 12 hours, so they're starting to hurt a little bit," said Brad Anderson, event coordinator and general manager at Energy Fitness Studio.

"But the toughest point is probably between 3 and 6 a.m.," he said. "It's when you get into the monkey-bender stuff. It's pitch black outside and your body tells you it should be sleeping."

"One the sun comes up, you know the end is coming."

Teams can have up to 10 riders, who decide among themselves how to divvy up the hours in relay fashion.

Someone must be spinning at all times, and the group is motivated by a spin instructor and pumping music.

The 126 participants also get fed and watered and had the use of a team hotel room.

Close to \$25,000 was raised, with the M&M team of Mario Elick and Matt Steve leading the pack at \$1,040.

"Sore, so sore," said Elick, between deep breaths and sweat wipes, at hour 22. "You just struggle though it. It's endurance and perseverance."

"And you know you're here for a very good cause. Everyone's been touched by cancer."

don.fraser@sunmedia.ca
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LOCAL NEWS

■ INDUSTRY

New GM Canada president tours plant

QMI Agency Niagara

The new president of GM Canada put some "boots on the ground" at the company's St. Catharines plant last Friday.

A month into his new job, Steve Carlisle toured the Glendale Ave. facility that assembles V6 and V8 engines. The 52-year-old president, who succeeded Kevin Williams, has spent his first month getting reacquainted with the company's manufacturing plants, all in Ontario.

The St. Catharines Powertrain plant provides engines for vehicles like the Silverado, Camaro, Tahoe and Cadillac CTS. "It was very positive," he said during a brief sit-down. "As I was saying earlier to our group, it's an inspiring way to spend a Friday."

"You can't walk away without being really motivated by the level of commitment to winning and the collaborative spirit."

With about 2,000 employees, the plant's Gen-5 engines powers the company's new Escalade and SUVs.

Unlike Oshawa, where the future of the aging assembly operations is still uncertain, the St. Catharines plant recently hired 170 new employees and offered its summer student program last year for the first time in 20 years. The plant produces

about 800,000 units per year.

"We're really excited where we are right now with all three of our products," plant manager Carolynne Watts said. "We've got a really skilled and engaged workforce."

Carlisle was impressed by the mix of new and experienced staff.

"You see the interaction among the experienced workforce, working shoulder to shoulder with the new hires who are absorbing all that and taking it to a whole other level. It was really cool."

"This is really the pinnacle of manufacturing, this kind of plant," added David Paterson, vice-president of corporate affairs. "You get more things coming together in one place and being done to perfection."

Born in Woodstock, Carlisle started with the company in 1982 as a co-op student at the now closed Oshawa truck assembly plant. After making the rounds in January, he intends to tackle GM's short-term goals — improving market share. In Canada, GM has slipped to third in sales.



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■ **BUSINESS:** Court documents show company owes \$5 billion

Creditors taking aim at Target

DAN DAKIN
QMI Agency Niagara

Three Niagara companies are among the hundreds of creditors owed money

from Target Canada.

When Target announced it was filing for bankruptcy protection and shutting the doors of its 133 locations in Can-

ada, it put into question billions of dollars owed to companies both across the country and around the world.

A list of creditors was posted online

by Alvarez and Marshall, the Toronto-based monitor for Target Canada's court proceedings. The list has more than 1,800 creditors on it, with more than \$5 billion owing.

Locally, three Niagara companies on the list are owed a total of nearly \$30,000 while Hamilton-based Horizon Utilities, which handles hydro services in St. Catharines, is owed more than \$77,000.

"No one on that list is going to see their money. That's just the reality of what's going to happen," said Marko Bukovec, the general manager of Menhollow Corporation of Canada, which has its headquarters on Hannover Dr. in St. Catharines.

The company makes personal care products like Oxy acne cream and Deep Relief pain reliever lotions. It's owed \$4,800, but Bukovec said that number could have been much higher.

"We were lucky because they had just wired us money the week before," he said.

The two other Niagara-based companies on the list are a numbered company based at a private residence in St. Catharines that's owed \$11,480 and Noor Pharmacy Ltd., also based in St. Catharines, which is owed \$13,554.

Just over the border, Buffalo-based companies Buffalo Games, Unifine LLC and Robinson Home Products are owed

a total of \$42,158.

While there are a handful of municipalities on the list, including the City of Barrie that's owed more than \$193,000, none of the municipalities in Niagara are on it.

Neither the Pen Centre or Seaway Mall are the list and both confirmed Tuesday they're not owed any money.

"When Target filed (for credit protection) they did not owe us any money. Their rent was paid in full," said Seaway Mall president Mike Bekasiro.

Pen Centre marketing director Rick Woodward said the massive renovation projects to convert former Zellers and Walmart locations into Targets were all paid for by the corporation.

"They invested those dollars in that building. That was their project not ours," he said.

Each store was estimated to have cost more than \$10 million to open.

Bukovec, whose company had a nationwide distribution deal with Target Canada, said he noticed issues early on after its 2012 launch.

"We had to give them projections on what we thought they would do for units per week," he said. "You knew right off the bat it wasn't happening."

"I don't think anyone thought closing the doors this fast was going to happen, but they had to do something."

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PORT COLBORNE - WAINFLEET CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Serving the Business Community Since 1902

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Let me start with a big thank you to our dedicated members and Board of Directors. It is through members and their involvement that the Port Colborne Wainfleet Chamber of Commerce continues to connect visitors and local residents to businesses, and businesses to other businesses in the South Niagara region. The staff of the Chamber, and the Board of Directors, is excited about the opportunity to serve and support the business community in the coming year. Our goal is to surpass the expectations of our membership through, among other initiatives, increased utilization of technology and social media.

We are looking forward to many new and exciting things for the Chamber as our membership grows and we continue to build and grow in 2015. We are working hard at finalizing our schedule of events and our goal is to bring strong programs and events that add real value to our members throughout the year. We anticipate that our members can look forward to many opportunities to network, advertise and professionally connect at all of our upcoming events including the Business Tradeshow, President Awards Dinner, BAS's and Mayor's Luncheon – and perhaps some new and exciting or joint partnering activities.

Congratulations and thank you to our businesses who work hard at providing the goods and services that keep visitors and residents coming back to our region time and time again. Special recognition to our members that were nominated for the Niagara Entrepreneur of the Year Awards in 2014. Good luck!

With the addition of new Board members in January, we look forward to new initiatives to keep our business community strong and provide support and opportunities for all.

Contact information for the Port Colborne Wainfleet Chamber of Commerce remains the same at:
phone - 905-834-9765 • fax - 905-834-1542 • email - office@pcwchamber.com • www.pcwchamber.com



Stephanie Babin

PRESIDENT'S AWARDS GALA- NOMINATIONS NOW OPEN!

We are happy to announce that the nominations for the President's Awards are now open! If you know an outstanding business or citizen from Port Colborne or Wainfleet who deserves recognition, nominate them for the chance to be honoured at the President's Awards Gala- taking place March 25, 2015. Nomination forms can be found on the Chamber website: www.pcwchamber.com. Deadline for nominations is February 18th.

We are seeking nominations for the following categories:

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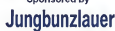
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PORT COLBORNE - WAINFLEET CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

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DOORS OPEN FOR THE INAUGURAL FALL BUSINESS TRADE SHOW

This past quarter, the Chamber was excited to offer a fresh new event within the community and was delighted to present the Inaugural Fall Business Trade Show. On November 6th, The Italian Canadian Cultural Center was transformed into an exhibition of local talent, as over thirty vendors set up displays promoting their business products and services. Drawing crowds from Port Colborne, Wainfleet and surrounding areas, the show provided the public with valuable information about the superior businesses located right here in the community. The Chamber is pleased with the results of the event, and looks forward to welcoming more vendor participants and attendees at future annual trade shows. A big thank you is extended to all who contributed to the success of the show!

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Business Express Centre
Canadian Niagara Power Inc.
Community Living Port Colborne/Wainfleet
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Upcoming Events

February 4th- BA5 Hosted by Market Cafe • March 4th- BA5 Hosted by the Township of Wainfleet • March 25th- President's Awards Reception

Social Media

Don't forget to 'Like' the PCW Chamber of Commerce on Facebook and follow @PCWChamber on twitter!





PORT COLBORNE - WAINFLEET CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

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JANUARY NEWSLETTER

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BUSINESS AFTER FIVE...



Members were treated to some EATalian hospitality at September's BAS hosted by Eatally foodst!



Midge Butson promotes the UWSN pumpkins for charity during October's BAS event hosted by Meridian Credit Union



Members gathered at Boston Pizza to enjoy a cup of good cheer at December's Holiday BAS, hosted by InPort News and Welland Tribune. The event offered double the fun, as the Welland/Pelham Chamber joined forces Port Colborne-Wainfleet Chamber of Commerce to create a networking extravaganza!

Remember, you can find all of our BAS Photos on our website: www.pcwchamber.com



Heather Price

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Michael Stefaniuk



PORT COLBORNE - WAINFLEET CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Serving the Business Community Since 1902

Welcome to the new members of the Port Colborne-Wainfleet Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors!

The results are in... and the nominees that will be joining the board are:

***Returning Director
(1 year term)***

Midge Butson, Meridian Credit
Union

***Newly Elected Directors
(3 year term)***

Matt Cherevaty, Vale-Port Colborne
Refinery
Christine Clark Lafleur, Port Cares

***Newly Elected Directors
(1 year term)***

Anna Oakes, Ingredion Canada
Corporation
Debi Katsmar, YDV Group

Congratulations to our new Directors! The rest of the board welcomes you, and looks forward to working together to keep the PCW Chamber going strong and to providing superior programming and benefits to all of its members!

MEMBERS IN THE NEWS

The Chamber takes pride in working with the outstanding businesses within the Port Colborne and Wainfleet communities, and we are well aware of the hard work and dedication that is put forth by our members. We are not alone in recognizing the achievements of our local business owners, and congratulate our members who have been nominated for a Niagara Entrepreneur of the Year Award! Good luck to Frank Di Bartolomeo from Newport Signs, Gail Atkinson-Todd from Something Else, Mark Melloni from Urge to Purge and Sam Bellhouse from Evolution Window Films- congratulations on your nomination! The Awards Ceremony is set to take place on Friday, February 20, 2015- Good Luck!

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LOCAL NEWS

■ **BUSINESS:** Fonthill warehouse to help meet housing contractors' demands

Habitat for Humanity opening second ReStore

DAN DAKIN
QMI Agency Niagara

Habitat for Humanity Niagara is opening a second ReStore.

The nonprofit agency that builds houses for families who couldn't normally afford them is taking over the former Wood Floor Depot building on Hwy. 20 in Fonthill.

The second ReStore, modelled closely after the original store on Hunting Rd. in St. Catharines, should be open by mid-March once renovations on the 10,000-square-foot warehouse are complete.

Habitat for Humanity moved into its current space in 2010. That location, at 150 Hunting Rd., has about 16,000 square feet of store and warehouse space.

Chief operating officer Keith Gowan said the store makes enough money to cover all of the agency's administrative costs each year. Additional fundraising covers the cost of building between three and five houses a year.

"But we recognize that's not enough. We need to build a lot more," Gowan said. The Hunting Rd. location has been so popular with contractors donating building materials that it was running out of space.

Rather than waiting a few more years to open a second store, it was the original plan, Gowan said they decided to move forward immediately.

"We always wanted to trigger a second store when we were bursting at the seams with the first store," he said. "The groundwork we laid with the partnerships from

across the region is really paying off."

After the Wood Floor Depot closed, the Fonthill building became Beatties Home Improvement Clearance Centre, which has since re-opened in Thorold.

Working with volunteers from Welland's Tucker Construction and some of the same contractors that often donate materials to the original ReStore, Habitat has undertaken a fairly extensive renovation of the building.

"We've opened up the building itself. We installed a beam to open the building from the warehouse to the store and we're working with the landlord to install energy efficient lighting," Gowan said.

Once open, the Fonthill ReStore will have a similar selection of building material, supplies, kitchens and furniture.

"We can't order any product. We rely on the goodness of others, so we have to fill the store fully before we open," said Gowan.

The goal is to have the two stores generating enough revenue to build an additional two or three homes each year.

Habitat for Humanity is looking for volunteers for the new location to help with customer service, receiving and sorting, kitchen cabinet collection and other roles.

"We rely heavily on the goodwill of others donating their time," Gowan said.

Habitat is also looking for more contractors and renovators to donate material and inventory.

To get involved, phone 905-685-7385.

dan.dakin@sunmedia.ca
Twitter: @dandakinmedia

■ **PUBLIC SAFETY**

City of Welland transfers wetland to NPCA

DAN DAKIN
QMI Agency Niagara

The City of Welland is handing over ownership of a large section of wetland to the region's conservation authority.

Both Welland city council and the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority board approved the transfer of 16 hectares (about 47 acres) that includes provincially significant wetlands located near the Welland River north of Broadway and east of Riverside Dr.

NPCA spokesman Michael Reles said the plan is to build walking trails through non-sensitive sections of the land.

"A portion of that is designated as a wetland, and there's a large portion that is not. There are areas we can use and open for public use. That's the idea. To make it a passive use," he said.

"We still want the public to go and use the area. By putting in the trails, we're able

to keep them out of the more sensitive wetland areas."

A specific plan for the parcel hasn't been set yet, but will likely feature dirt or gravel paths and possibly a parking area, Reles said.

Welland Mayor Frank Campion said it makes sense for NPCA to own the land.

"We want to have that land protected, but there's a cost associated with doing that and that's not our business," he said. "So the best place for that land is with the NPCA, because that's what they do."

Campion said he's happy to hear the area will be improved for public use.

"They know how to maintain it and they know what they can put in and how to do it properly. If we were to do it, we would have been going through them to get the approvals anyway, so this is a direct pipeline," he said.

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f t+ p

Families urged to improve heart health

YMCA of Niagara and Niagara Health System want to inspire people to get fit together with the launch of the Niagara Families Healthy Heart Challenge.

As part of Heart Health month in February, the initiative asks people to make a 30-day commitment to lower the risk of heart disease by participating in 30 minutes of physical activity together with their family at least three times a week.

To help encourage that activity, the YMCA will be offering free one-week Try My Y membership passes and the NHS will have a registered clinical exercise physiologist provide advice and tips on risk factors of heart disease.

In addition, Niagara Regional Public Health will be offering free healthy eating seminars at YMCAs across the region. Printable tracking calendars

with activity ideas, details on registering for healthy eating sessions and free passes to the YMCA are available at www.ymcaofniagara.org.

Participants who submit their calendars at the end of the challenge, or post photos of their activities to social media using the hashtag #healthyheartsNiagara, have the chance to win a three-month family membership to the Y.

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IN BRIEF

Ice fishing derby Sunday

The annual Birkbrook Hard Water Cup Derby is this Sunday.

The ice fishing event takes place 7 a.m. to 1 p.m. at Birkbrook Conservation Area.

Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority and Glenbrook Conservation Committee have been holding the derby for several years, with attendance ranging between 300 and 400 people each year.

Prizes are to be won in both adult and youth categories and there will be entry prizes for people who

get skunked. Derby prizes are awarded for crappie only.

Located on Lake Niagara, Birkbrook Conservation Area opens its gates every winter for recreational ice fishing.

The lake has populations of northern pike, walleye, largemouth bass, small mouth bass, white and black crappie, yellow perch, pumpkinseed, rock bass, brown bullhead and carp.

Derby entry fees are \$30 for adults and \$15 for youth.

The entry fee includes a catered lunch.

They are available at www.npca.ca/conservation-areas/birkbrook or at three tackle shops in Niagara: Erie Tracker Outfitters, 11 Kitley St. W., Port Colborne; Peter's Tackle, 22 Second Dr., St. Catharines; Grimsby Tackle, 515 Main St. W., Grimsby.

Port Colborne child care centre may move

The Port Colborne Regional Child Care Centre will be getting a new home,

if regional council accepts its public health and social services committee's recommendation.

The committee voted Tuesday to recommend relocating the centre from Northland Ave. to Steele Street School.

The building opening costs at the new location are projected to be lower and costly capital expenses at the Northland Ave. site will be avoided, Darlene Edgar, the region's director of children's services, said.

"If you know where the centre is, it is located on the outskirts," Edgar said.

"Steele Street School is much more central."

Funding for the relocation — including renovation costs, equipment and furnishings — is expected to be paid for by the Ministry of Education.

Locating the child care centre with the school will permit full day learning on site and provide better service to families, Edgar said.

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■ **COMMUNITY:** Non-partisan group wants to force politicians to deal with the issue at election time

Fighting words on poverty

DAN DAKIN

QMI Agency Niagara

Niagara Poverty Reduction Network wants to make its cause an election issue.

With a federal vote coming sometime before late October, the advocacy group wants candidates to put poverty high on their priority list.

"We're trying to figure out a strategy for how we need to look at in Niagara," said poverty network engagement chair Jennifer Pothier Saturday.

During a session held as part of the eighth annual Niagara Social Justice Forum at Brock University, Pothier said things like a federal housing plan would make a positive difference on poverty in Niagara.

"We're just in the beginning of figuring out where we want to go, but we know that housing is going to be important," she said. "It's not a partisan

group in any way, it's to raise the issues and say, 'You don't have a national poverty strategy.'"

The group also wants to push for improved employment insurance, easier tax filing and the return of the long-

form census to collect better poverty-related data.



NOILES

"Without that information, how can policymakers make the right decisions?" asked poverty network co-chair Willy Noiles. The network identified things like employment, child care, housing, health and public policy as factors that contribute to the problem.

A high school student at the session Saturday said what

affects her most is what she hopes will keep her out of poverty in the future.

"You need to get an education to get out of poverty. But in order to go to university or college you need money, so you have to get into debt to get out of it. It's a vicious cycle," said Maddie McNeil, a Grade 11 student from Beamsville.

She said she's working part-time to save because she expects to spend around \$20,000 a year on her post-secondary education.

"If you don't have parents who can help pay for it, then you have to support yourself," McNeil said.

"I'm lucky if I get eight hours a week at work, but I'm saving so I can start early to pay for it."

Noiles said a good education doesn't guarantee work. The reality for many people in Niagara is they're either unemployed or are in mini-

POVERTY IN NIAGARA

67,525 – Shelter bed nights occupied each year.

11,035 – People waiting for affordable housing.

\$1.38 billion – Cost of poverty on Niagara (health care, lost productivity, social assistance).

1 in 3 – Food bank users are children.

— 2013 Statistics from Niagara Poverty Reduction Network

mum wage jobs.

"If you're making \$11 an hour, how is that going to help?" he said.

The poverty network estimates someone working a low-paying, full-time job would earn less than it costs to cover their monthly expenses.

"At the absolute core of poverty is the lack of income," Noiles said.

Those poverty factors often lead to people turning to exploitative solutions like cash advance loans, rent-to-own stores and the drug and

sex trades.

But Pothier said poverty also affects people not living in low-income situations.

A Brock research study showed poverty cost Niagara \$1.38 billion in 2012 in health care, law enforcement, lost productivity and social assistance costs.

"If people realize it's affecting their wallets, maybe we can get through to them," Pothier said.

The poverty network says with that much extra money every year, Niagara could

build 1,200 new houses for those who need them, buy more than 600 buses for public transit or employ 5,000 people at \$55,000 a year jobs.

Jeff Sincich, the poverty network research and evaluation committee chair, said what needs to happen is to start fixing the problems before they happen rather than dealing with the repercussions.

"Instead of building more shelters, why don't we figure out how to keep people in their homes?" he said.

The end goal is to eventually get all Niagara residents over the poverty line.

"We know that's not going to happen today or tomorrow, or next year, but it's an ultimate goal," said Noiles.

For more information on the Niagara Poverty Reduction Network, visit www.nipenetwork.ca.

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LOCAL NEWS

■ **COMMUNITY:** Facebook helps police, paramedics get to man considering suicide

Saved by social media

BILL SAWCHUK
QMI Agency Niagara

On a day when social media in Canada was buzzing with talk of mental health, Niagara police and Facebook teamed up to save the life of a suicidal young St. Catharines man last Wednesday.

"We were contacted by a security employee from Facebook at about 7:30 p.m. about a male from St. Catharines who attempted to injure himself and posted the video to Facebook," said Const. Phil Gavin of the Niagara Regional Police.

Police dispatched a cruiser and paramedics to the man's home.

The 24-year-old was found and taken to hospital, where he is recovering.

"Facebook is this billion-member monster, and it has both positive and negative effects on people's lives," Gavin said.

"This is a case where the safety net did what it was supposed to do. They found something and moved on it quickly, and potentially saved a life."

Wednesday was Let's Talk day, a national campaign sponsored by Bell that aims to



break the stigma surrounding mental illness and raise awareness.

Bell was contributing five cents for each text message sent, mobile and long distance call made, Facebook share and tweet using the #BellLetsTalk hashtag.

Distress Centre Niagara director Stacy Terry said the 24-hour distress line receives

upwards of 13,000 calls annually. About 12% are related to suicide.

"Posting a video online could be a sign of the person's ambivalence, but it is really a question for the individual to answer," Terry said.

"It is so individual for every person. You can't just look at one or two specific things."

Terry said there are outward

signs that someone might be at risk of suicide, especially if they are behaving in a way that is new or out of character.

"One of the most important things to recognize is a change in someone," she said. "We don't always want to be looking for the person who is at risk or depressed or distressed."

Sometimes they will have a major change in their usual

SUICIDE PREVENTION RESOURCES

If you or someone you know is contemplating suicide or is an imminent risk to themselves, phone 911.

For other crisis and distress situations

Distress Centre Niagara: www.distresscentreniagara.com

St. Catharines/Niagara Falls: 905-688-3711.

Port Colborne/Welland: 905-734-1212.

Beamsville/Grimsby: 905-563-6674.

Fort Erie: 905-382-0689.

The distress centre is a 24-hour hotline for people who are depressed, distressed or in crisis.

Kids Help Phone: www.kidshelpline.ca; 1-800-668-6868.

Kids Help Phone is a 24-hour crisis hotline and website to

connect young people to a counsellor.

Pathstone Mental Health crisis line for children and youths:

www.pathstonementalhealth.ca; 1-800-263-4944.

COAST (Crisis Outreach and Support Team): 1-866-550-5205.

Mobile crisis intervention service providing immediate telephone counselling and, if necessary, on-site crisis intervention.

personality. They may normally be extroverted and they may not be doing the things they usually do.

"Or someone might not be a risk-taker, and now they are engaging in risk-taking behaviour. Someone might be giving away their possessions.

Those are the types of things we should be looking for.

"At the very least, ask them the direct question about suicide. Then get other people involved and direct them to the right service."

Bill Sawchuk@summedia.ca

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LOCAL NEWS

■ SWEET TREAT

For the love of wine and chocolate

BOB TYMCZYSZYN
QMI Agency Niagara

For people with a sweet tooth and love of wine, February could be the most wonderful time of year.

For four weekends in February, beginning Feb. 6, guests will be able to sample sweet and savoury along with vintages at 26 wineries in Niagara-on-the-Lake during the Days of Wine and Chocolate.

For \$35 plus tax you can go and visit all the wineries and sample chocolate-inspired treats paired with a specific wine.

"I think they will be very surprised," said Michelle Bosc, director of marketing for Chateau des Charmes and

chair of Wineries in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

"Most people think of chocolate as sweet and dessert but it doesn't have to be."

Bosc gave an example of pulled pork with a chocolate mole sauce.

"We really take the time to focus on the pairing," she said.

At Chateau des Charmes employees will be pairing a Cabernet Franc with a spicy biscuit flavoured with chocolate and cayenne.

"Your pass is good until you've hit every winery," said Bosc. "You can pop in Friday, Saturday or Sunday and try whatever you like and next weekend do it all over again."



Most people think of chocolate as sweet and dessert but it doesn't have to be."

Michelle Bosc, director of marketing for Chateau des Charmes and chair of Wineries

For this year organizers have done away with paper-based passes. Visitors are directed from the Wineries in Niagara-on-the-Lake website to purchase an electronic ticket which is then e-mailed so you can take it

with you all the time.

Small Talk Vineyards owner Hank Hunske suggested people don't visit more than five wineries in a day. "Don't rush. You can visit as many as you want," he said.

"It's an opportunity to sample some of the other wines besides the pairings."

Small Talk will be showcasing white chocolate covered pineapple and a Retelling Icedwine cocktail.

"It's a great time to visit wine country," said Bosc. "The winemakers are busy at this time in the cellars, but they will still get lots of attention from staff."

For more information on the event visit <http://wineriesofniagarasonthelake.com>.



BOB TYMCZYSZYN / QMI AGENCY NIAGARA

Hank Hunske, owner of Small Talk winery where they will be participating in the Days of Wine and Chocolate event for four weekends in February, beginning Feb. 6.

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